

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR."

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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#### CHAPTER XXI. COUSIN SARAH.

THE Admiral's sister-in-law, Mrs. Grant, and her daughter were now ruling at the Towers. In one way this added to Colin's happiness, for his lady-love could now come to the Towers under his aunt's chaperonage.

Mrs. Grant was tall, stiff, and angular, very prim of manner. Her very presence seemed to radiate cold instead of warmth. A French gentleman who had once met her had described her to his friend as a lady always afflicted with "le spleen," a malady supposed to be peculiar to England.

Miss Grant, on the other hand, was too active and too energetic, and education was her hobby. She had had every advantage herself, and her own standard was, in her opinion, the only one worth having. She knew many things and was very thorough, but she despised all weak and foolish women, and domineered over them in a manner which made the crushed worms sometimes turn.

Some women get their own way by shedding tears, and others by being firmly disagreeable. Sarah Grant seldom allowed any one to thwart her, but then she was a very capable person; she could "manage" better than most people, and found no undertaking too much for her. Whether it were a party, a school-feast, or a charitable meeting, all was done in a thoroughly business-like manner. It was sure to be well arranged, but then she never cared how

many people she put out, or how many she inconvenienced, in the carrying out of her plans. No sooner had she settled down at the Towers for a long visit than she looked about for something that wanted settling. Certainly the Church wanted settling, but so did the Rector and so did the Curate, with whom must be included the congregation itself. Then Longham society was very shallow and frivolous, very uneducated; however, even Sarah's capability could not compass the higher education of all the business men and their wives, though she meditated long on some plan for doing this. Lectures she decided might do for a beginning, and if no one else turned up she herself was prepared to give them.

Naturally she saw a great deal of the Miss Gordons, Colin's engagement having taken place just after her arrival; at first she was delighted to find out that they were ladies, but on closer inspection she was shocked to see that though they might be accomplished their education was not solid, and that they did not even seem to wish to be better grounded. Sarah took the determination to warn Colin of the folly he was about to commit in making Beatrice Gordon his wife, for the Admiral only looked at pretty faces, caring nothing for learning, and so could not with propriety warn his son. One day when Beatrice was expected to spend the day at the Towers, Sarah attacked her cousin after breakfast in this manner:

"I do think it is a pity, Colin, that you should marry a girl who, after the first bloom of beauty has worn off, will have nothing left. She will be a mere doll." Sarah paused, whilst the Captain looked alarmed. He was always more or less frightened when Sarah attacked him; be-

sides, he did not like to hear his Beatrice maligned.

"She is not a blue-stocking, my dear Sarah, certainly, but she will get more time by-and-by for reading; besides——"

But Sarah was indignant; to call an educated woman a blue-stocking annoyed her excessively.

"You men are all alike; you like a bit of pink and white china, and never think of anything beyond. Look at Charles Andrew and his wife, that silly little piece of vanity; they say he is always on thorns as to what she will say next."

"I am very sorry for him, but I see no parallel," said the Captain, who was very patient with Sarah, because in his own mind he always looked upon her as having been jilted in early youth—the truth being that she had never had an offer, though she would not have owned this for the world.

"Well, I don't think Mrs. Gordon has done her duty by those girls, they all think of nothing but their clothes; in fact I don't like Mrs. Gordon at all, and mother thinks the same as I do. I believe she is——"

"Ahem!" said the Captain in a warning tone, for the door was opened and Beatrice herself entered, looking extremely pretty, and very shy, but so nicely dressed that evidently she had been thinking of her clothes that very morning.

"I was coming to fetch you," said the Captain, going hastily forward, with an old-fashioned politeness which was only increased and not diminished because he was engaged.

"I came up early because mother wants you to come down and settle about our Christmas entertainments; and she and Minnie are going to London this morning to choose all sorts of things for the new house; they want to see you first."

"Certainly, I will come at once; and then after that you may like to take a walk."

Beatrice smiled an assent, though she felt terribly frightened of "Cousin Sarah," who, after a chilly greeting, was knitting as if her livelihood depended on it, looking sternly at the fire instead of towards Beatrice.

"Will you excuse me a minute, Beatrice?" said the Captain. "I want to speak to my father before I go out;" and off went the lover, leaving Beatrice to face Sarah alone—who was in her most disagreeable mood—and who remarked drily:

"I thought you did not go out in the morning, Miss Gordon, because you and your sisters did so much needlework."

Beatrice thought her future cousin very rude, but tried to answer pleasantly.

"No, we do not often go out, but to-day I have a holiday."

"I suppose you never get time to open a book?"

"I do now," began Bee, "since Colin told me he would like me to read regularly."

"You won't continue that practice very long if you only do it to please Colin—but I assure you he is a very intellectual man, and he likes talking to superior people."

Beatrice blushed, and felt that she was not at all superior, and that the speaker was odious.

"Would you like to join a reading society? I am secretary to one and could put your name down for election, but we never elect people who are not in earnest."

"How do you know when people are in earnest?" stammered Beatrice, not knowing she was sarcastic.

"By the books they have already read. We ask for a list."

"Then I am sure you would not elect me, I have only read novels and a few lives of——"

"Of course, for my cousin's sake I should make an exception in your favour," said Miss Sarah, condescendingly; but, happily for Bee, Colin entered at this moment, and she hastily bid his cousin good-bye.

"Oh, Colin," she said, when they were well out of the house, "I am too stupid for you. You will feel tired of me some day; your cousin said as much to me."

Colin laughed heartily as he drew Bee's small hand into his arm.

"What nonsense! My dear child, don't notice what Sarah says. The truth is, I believe she must have been jilted when she was young, and that makes her a little sharp."

"Well, then, I will not mind what she says; but I should die, Colin, if you got tired of me. I know I should. I mean to make myself very clever and very wonderful just for your sake."

"But, my darling, you are quite clever enough for me. I don't want a blue-stocking."

"No; but Sarah said one day that after a time men get tired of pretty wives who have no ideas, and that they then repent of having ever married them. She gave

me two years—no more; and then she said I would see!"

"You will see that every year I shall think you are a great deal too good for me."

"But, Colin, sometimes I think that you do not really know us—know me, I mean. You think that I have all kinds of high ideas which I have not got. I wish I had."

"What nonsense, darling. Don't you know that you are only too good for me? Now, what do you think I have settled with my father? That you are all to come to spend Christmas at the Towers. You see, he would not like me to be away from him all day; so this cuts the knot. What say you to that, Miss Beatrice?"

Beatrice in her heart did not quite like the plan. Between Cousin Sarah and her own sister, Minnie, there would be but little peace for her. She would get less of Colin than she did even at home. However, she would not tell him so. One thing the girl had learned at home, and that was to give up her own way. So she assented as cordially as she could.

"Ah, I thought that would please you, that is if your lady mother agrees. There is another thing I want to tell you, Beatrice; it is a secret, but we must have no more secrets in future, eh? I have found out that that little Philips is very fond of Minnie Gordon, so at Christmas we shall have him here a good deal. What do you say to that?"

This time Bee shook her head.

"No, Colin, it will be no good."

"What, has it gone as far as that?"

"No, but of course Minnie knows he admires her, and all that, but now there is not the least chance."

"Why not?" asked Colin.

"Because," said Bee, innocently, "since we came in for this money of course Minnie could not think of marrying a curate." Beatrice, looking up, saw a strange look on her lover's face.

"And suppose I had waited till now to propose to you, should I, also, have had no chance?" he said, a little sternly.

"Please don't say it like that, Colin; no, indeed, I should always have cared about you if you had been ever so poor; but Minnie, you know, is prettier than I am, and——"

"I suppose most women marry the money and not the man," he said, half sadly; "but after all this poor Philips is a gentleman and a capital fellow. He may

not be much to look at, but one can't listen to him on Sundays and not believe he has a big soul; he wants to do us good, but we are, I am afraid, quite satisfied with ourselves. Do you really believe your sister would throw him over because she is now richer than she was?"

"Don't put it like that, Colin; and I don't believe Minnie ever cared for him; in fact I know she did not; but still—no—Minnie would never marry a poor man; she would be quite out of her element."

"I thought you had never been very rich?"

"You know we have not, but all the same Minnie has always looked forward to the time when she should be rich, and she thought that there was no way to alter her position but by marrying a rich man."

"And yet now you say she would not marry a poor one."

"No, I feel sure she won't; but please, Colin, don't ask me any more; you will never believe that I could think differently. There now, say you never will."

"Nonsense, child, you don't want my word for it."

Nevertheless the Captain had experienced a mental shock about the Gordon family; perhaps it was partly caused by the failure of his plan about his friend the Curate. Well, he would think no more about it, and, to be fair, Beatrice had certainly owned that the Curate had never had a chance.

Very soon he was sitting in conclave in the Gordons' drawing-room and propounding his plan about Christmas.

Mrs. Gordon thought it delightful, and Frances agreed. Minnie said something about their being too many to invade the Towers, but her objections were soon overruled. After this was settled, Mrs. Gordon plunged into a discussion about furniture and arrangements concerning the Warren. Colin must give his opinion, as he was to come there for a certain little affair which might take place next year; besides, of course he must come directly they were settled in, but that was not to be till April or May. With the fine weather they would take their flight homeward like the swallows, etc. The truth was, Mrs. Gordon had settled that it would be better for everybody to let the talk about James Gordon's girls blow off, so that there would be less chance of the scandal reaching her dear girls' ears. Besides, she did not wish Colin to hear anything about it. It was already unfortunate

that he had chanced to have once seen these very girls. However, she had ascertained that his friends had left the place, and that he was not likely to hear local gossip when staying at the Warren.

The family conclave broke up, everybody was well pleased about the future plans; the present was so bright, the future would be brighter. But Colin Grant found out that day what wiser men find out earlier in life, that when you get engaged to a girl you have to adopt her mother and all her sisters and brothers as your own relations; and that if these relations are not of your own way of thinking you have a good deal to put up with. However, Beatrice made up for it all; so he thought as he said good-bye to her that evening and saw the truthful eyes look up at him as she said:

"Colin, you won't think that I could alter, will you?"

#### CHAPTER XXII. TAKING POSSESSION.

IT was a bright, warm May day, when the Gordon ladies said farewell for ever to their Longham villa. It is needless to describe the good-byes of all the neighbours, how a few sincerely said they would miss them, but how the greater part cared more to know who would be the next occupant at the villa, than whether Mrs. Gordon would be happy at the Warren. Of course, people who come in for fortunes always are happy, and those who have not that happiness feel just a little jealous that Fate has not been so kind to them. The Crozlys were profuse in their good wishes, but they hoped that some of their civility would be repaid by invitations to their grand new home, "which, perhaps, after all isn't much," said Miss Crozby to her mother. Miss Crozby had always been jealous of the beauty of her neighbours, for really it was rather aggravating to go out with girls to whom one only acted as a foil.

It was settled that Colin should accompany the Gordons to their new home; Mrs. Gordon had been backwards and forwards several times to see about furniture and wall papers, but she had never taken her daughters with her. She wanted the whole thing to be a surprise to them; and also she preferred having her own way about the arrangements, or so she said.

New servants, too, were engaged; the Gordons were to be all new together; and how they would enjoy life! Minnie

had nearly recovered her spirits at the bare idea of a baronet who might fall desperately in love with her—she would, of course, make a great favour of marrying him. But, naturally, she kept these thoughts for her own private enjoyment. Poor Mr. Philips had come to bid them good-bye, and had ventured to keep Minnie's hand a few seconds longer than was absolutely necessary. He had had a smile for his reward which had sent him home having all the battle to fight over again. Should he ever find courage to make Minnie Gordon an offer? How he envied Captain Grant! All his love-making had been so easy.

At last the train stopped at Coleham Station. Colin jumped out of the first-class carriage (never before had the Gordons travelled all together in a first-class carriage), and handed out his future relations with a hearty grasp of his hand and a cheery "welcome home at last." A fly was waiting for them besides their own new carriage and pair, and even Mr. Blackston was ready on the platform to offer his services to the new heirs.

Beatrice could only gaze about her in admiration as they passed through the long street, and then ascended the hill and saw the old castle peeping out of its newly-awakened foliage. At the top of the long hill they first felt the delicious breeze which swept over the great heathy tableland across which they had to drive for several miles. Everything was beautiful, and Beatrice, looking up at Colin and at her mother, said:

"You never told me half the beauties of this place."

"You will not care for the Towers after this," said the Captain, smiling. "But, in truth, I had forgotten the scenery; it was years ago that I was here. One thing alone I remembered—the faces of those girls who were so like you and Minnie."

Frances looked up at her mother; how curious Colin should mention this just now! Mrs. Gordon hastened to point out the distant views, and to name some of the places she had already learnt to recognise.

"My cousin showed his taste in choosing such a spot to live in, don't you think, Colin?"

"Certainly. But he did not show his taste by living alone here. However, I suppose you will not quarrel with him on that account?"

"If he had had a wife he would have



had a dozen children, and we should not have come here," said Minnie. "I wonder if we shall be deluged with callers?" Minnie's taste lay more in the ways of society than in the paths of Nature's scenery. "You must come, Colin, very often, and help us to entertain the men. It is very tiresome of Austin to exile himself in this way!"

Minnie was now especially gracious to her future brother-in-law, she foresaw ways of making him very useful; but as he did not guess her motive, the worthy fellow was quite won over—for few men are proof against a pretty woman's attentions. Not that he would for a moment have wished to change his choice; but, still, he had forgiven the affair of poor Philips.

So all the party chatted happily—all except Bee, who cared more to gaze at the scenery than to talk of society. She was glad they were going to live quite in the country; there would not be so many tiresome neighbours, and perhaps she might put pride in her pocket, and join Sarah Grant's reading society.

At last the carriage turned into the drive leading to the Warren, and round by the front door. The old house was looking its very best; the garden was done up; the windows reflected the May sun; the bees hummed about the early rhododendrons; everything seemed to welcome these new Gordons.

Only Mrs. Gordon, as she stepped into the hall, had a strange sensation; she almost fancied she saw before her two beautiful girls, young and innocent, ignorant of what trouble was coming upon them. For a moment it seemed as if the sunlight flashed across Sibyl's golden head and Grace's pathetic eyes; then, with a little nervous laugh, Mrs. Gordon dismissed the vision, and turned with pride towards her own three daughters.

"Welcome, dear children, to your new home."

Whereupon everybody kissed everybody, and smiles could be seen on all their pretty faces.

In the background were the servants, some helping with the luggage, the others respectfully curtsying. For the first time Mrs. Gordon felt that she was in the position which she had always intended to fill, and which she knew she could fill to perfection.

There was, of course, a hasty inspection of the rooms—the two drawing-rooms, the large dining-room, no longer gloomy, a

pretty morning-room, and a library filled with books, to which Mrs. Gordon pointed as she said to Colin:

"You see we have provided some fitting place for the learned Captain Grant."

It must be said that the Captain's first thought was that he and Bee would have a blissful week in these odd corners of the great heath, away from Cousin Sarah's reproving eyes, and he gave no heed at all as to how much he and Bee could improve their minds.

Upstairs the rooms had been a good deal changed and renovated. The old schoolroom was no longer recognisable, for it was fitted up as a morning-room for the young ladies. Easy-chairs and pretty nick-nacks lay about; a grand piano replaced the old cottage one; and Grace and Sibyl's large arm-chair had disappeared altogether—it was put right away in some lumber room.

"This is a pretty room!" cried Beatrice, delighted; "look at the jasmine and roses climbing up to the very top. Later on, we can pick a nosegay out of the window."

"Gather ye rosebuds while you may," said the Captain; "eh, Miss Bee?"

At five o'clock there was a delightful and sociable tea in the big drawing-room, and much animated talk about the furniture and all the many new things Mrs. Gordon had bought. The girls had not a word to say against their mother's taste, which was perfect; and as she sat in the midst of them she enjoyed their happiness, and her own. The possessive pronoun was continually on their lips; and how sweet it sounded!

"If only Austin were here," they all said, "then everything would be quite perfect. How tiresome of him to insist on keeping his word to that young man!"

"And the dear fellow has managed that I should find a letter from him awaiting me. How like him, dear fellow!" said Mrs. Gordon, slipping her son's letter into her pocket. It was too precious to be read in public; and next to having him in person it was really delightful to have a letter from him. The pleasure of ownership would not be perfect till Austin came home, then he should do as he liked about his future; money would be plentiful, and he need not deny himself. It was Bee alone, however, who thought of thanking her, as they went upstairs together.

"Dear mother, what trouble you have taken for us," she said, as she looked round her bedroom. For the first time in her life she was to have a bedroom to

herself; and her mother had chosen her favourite blue for the draperies. It was the bedroom that had belonged to Miss Evans; but it would not have been recognised by her.

When she was alone in her own room, Mrs. Gordon sat down to read her dear Austin's letter. She ought, indeed, to have been a happy woman, but the direction at the top of her son's letter made her start.

"How strange some things are! Of all places in Germany who could have expected Austin to settle at Fribourg!"

Thus ran the letter:

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,—I hope I shall time this letter so as to let you find it at your arrival at the Warren. As I cannot give you a personal welcome, let this letter do it for me. I have not been able to find time to tell you about our plans, as we have travelled a good deal since we left Italy. Jones' mother wrote to him quite unexpectedly to tell him she had heard of an excellent German professor and his wife living at Fribourg, who were willing to take us into their house. Mrs. Jones said that these were bonâ fide Germans of the best type; that they could not talk English; and that the professor would be delighted to teach us his gracious, guttural language.

"You remember that Stanford was especially to learn colloquial German thoroughly, so we are to stay here a year. Of course, I have bargained for a good holiday in the middle of the time.

"Well, here we are, and prepared to put up with German ways in a German flat, and to grind the tongue into our brains. Bless the beautiful Vaterland and its terrible language!

"This town is very interesting and the scenery around is pretty. There are some lovely walks, we hear, but we have not yet explored them. The chief glory of the place is its cathedral; but I must leave its description till another day.

"I wonder how the girls bear their new honours. I suppose Captain Grant will keep Bee in order; but I must take the conceit out of Minnie when I get home. I know Frances will take life quietly everywhere. Has Minnie thrown over the Curate? I hope not; though I fancy her heart was never much captivated. You see, I am leaving all love-making to my sisters; I only walk along the paths that lead to fame. We have the usual

appendages here of a German town—heaps of soldiers, and heaps of students. These last are always duelling, and appear every morning wearing fresh pieces of diachylon plaster on their flat faces. I point the moral to Jones by telling him that diachylon does not adorn a face.

"I long to be with you, dear mother; still, promises are promises, and the young man seems to appreciate my company. You ladies would turn up your eyes and lift your hands in horror at our professor and his wife. She does all the housework, and looks like a cook in the morning, and like a housekeeper in the afternoon. But she comes of a most respectable family, so her husband says; at least, we think the word means respectable, though we cannot quite agree about it, and the dictionary does not produce the article. On the floor beneath ours lives an old lady who takes in boarders. She is very prim when we meet her on the stairs, and will not even look at us. An officer lodges above us—at least, we call him an officer, for we never see him; but he comes in late, and perfumes the universal staircase with the fumes of his cigars. He goes out early, and does the same. If we knew enough German we should suggest that there are too many fleas; but we cannot find the word for flea-powder anywhere, and the chemist refuses to give us any; at least, any of the thing we ask for. Tell the girls to write, and to give me their opinion of the Warren. Your affectionate son,

"AUSTIN GORDON."

"Dear boy!" soliloquised the widow. "One would not guess from this letter that he is very peculiar in his views. Of course, these two young men will never meet those girls. It is quite impossible. Why should they? They are in a girls' school, too. Quite impossible."

At this moment Mrs. Gordon's maid entered, and the mistress of the Warren gave herself up into the hands of her new abigail with a sigh of happiness, as she said to herself:

"At last, at last I am in possession."

#### ABOUT ROSEMARY.

"DOTH not Rosemary and Romeo both begin with a letter?" asks Juliet's nurse. Yes, but what did she mean by the query, and by the further remark that "Juliet

hath the prettiest sententions of it, of you and rosemary, that it would do you good to hear it"? For answer we must make some search into the beliefs and customs of the past.

Rosemary is the "*Ros-marinus*" of the old herbalists, but it is not a native of Britain, and there is no exact record of when it was introduced here from the south of Europe. Mention of "*Ros-marinus*" occurs in an Anglo-Saxon vocabulary of the eleventh century, where it is translated *Feld-madder* and *Sun-dew*. There is some doubt whether this has reference to the same plant now known to us as rosemary, but in no case was it the *Rose of Mary*, as some have supposed. It is not a rose, and the "*Mary*" is from "*marinus*," or "*maris*." The old English spelling was *Rosmarin*, or *Rosmarine*; in these forms one finds the word in Gower, and Shensstone, and other old poets.

In the south of Europe the rosemary has long had magic properties ascribed to it. The Spanish ladies used to wear it as an antidote against the evil eye, and the Portuguese called it the *Elfin plant*, and dedicated it to the fairies. The idea of the antidote may have been due to a confusion of the name with that of the *Virgin*; but as a matter of fact the "*Ros-marinus*" is frequently mentioned by old Latin writers, including Horace and Ovid. The name came from the fondness of the plant for the sea-shore, where it often gets sprinkled with the "*ros*," or dew of the sea, that is to say, sea-spray. Another cause of confusion, perhaps, was that the leaves of the plant somewhat resemble those of the juniper, which in mediæval times was held sacred to the *Virgin Mary*. In the island of Crete, it is said, a bride dressed for the wedding still calls, last of all, for a sprig of rosemary to bring her luck. And now we come to find rosemary in close association with both marriage and death, just as the hyacinth was, and perhaps still is, among the Greeks. It is interesting to trace the connection by which the same plant came to have two such different uses.

One of the earliest mentions of rosemary in English literature is in a poem of the fourteenth century called "*The Glorious Rosemaryne*," which begins thus:

This herbe is callit rosemaryn,  
Of vertu that is gode and fyne;  
But all the vertues tell I ne can,  
Nor, I trowe, no erthely man.

Nevertheless, the poet proceeds to record at great length many astounding virtues,

including the restoration of youth to the aged by bathing in rosemary water.

The "*cheerful rosemarie*" and "*refreshing rosemarine*" of Spenser became a great favourite in England, although now the plant is hardly allowed garden space.

Sir Thomas More said: "I let it run all over my garden walls, not only because my bees love it, but because 'tis the herb sacred to remembrance, and therefore to friendship: whence a sprig of it hath a dumb language that maketh it the chosen emblem at our funeral wakes and in our burial grounds." The popularity of the plant was doubtless due to the long-enduring scent and verdure of the leaves. It is one of the most lasting of evergreens, and the pleasant aromatic odour lingers very long after the leaves have been gathered. Fragrance and endurance, then, are the characteristics of a plant which came to be commonly accepted as an emblem of constancy, as also of loving remembrance. Thus it is that Herrick sings of it:

Grow for two ends, it matters not at all,  
Be't for my bridal or my burial.

Thus it is that we find Friar Laurence over Juliet's body, saying:

Dry up your tears, and stick yo ur rosemary  
On this fair corse,

which is certainly not what the nurse meant when she told Romeo of the "*prettiest sententions*."

High medicinal properties were ascribed to the rosemary, so much so that old Parkinson writes: "Rosemary is almost as great use as bayer, both for outward and inward remedies, and as well for civill as physicall purposes; inwardly for the head and heart, outwardly for the sinews and joynts; for civill uses, as all do know, at weddings, funerals, etc., to bestow among friends; and the physicall are so many that you might as well be tyred in the reading as I in the writing, if I should set down all that might be said of it."

One of the "*physicall*" uses was in stirring up the tankard of ale or sack, while at weddings a sprig was usually dipped in the loving-cup to give it fragrance as well as luck.

The virtues of the plant are celebrated in a curious wedding-sermon quoted by Hone:

"The rosemary is for married men, the which by name, nature, and continued use, man challengeth as property belonging to himself. It overtoppeth all the flowers in the garden boasting man's rule; it helpeth the

brain, strengtheneth the memory, and is very medicinal for the head. Another property is, it affects the heart. Let this *ros-marinus*, this flower of man, ensign of your wisdom, love, and loyalty, be carried not only in your hands but in your heads and hearts."

One does not easily reconcile this laudation with the popular superstition that wherever the rosemary flourished, there should the woman be the ruling power. To this superstition, be it noted, has been ascribed the disfavour into which the plant has fallen among gardeners since Shakespeare's time. Moreover, good Dr. Roger Hacket was evidently confused between "*maris*" (of man), and "*maris*" (of the sea).

The medical properties may have been overrated by old Parkinson, but some are recognised even to this day. Thus it is used as an infusion to cure headaches, and is believed to be an extensive ingredient in hair restorers. It is also one of the ingredients in the manufacture of Eau de Cologne, and has many other uses in the form of oil of rosemary. It is said that bees which feed on rosemary-blossoms produce a very delicately-flavoured honey. Perfumers are greatly indebted to it. According to De Gubernatis, the flowers of the plant are proof against rheumatism, nervous indisposition, general debility, weakness of sight, melancholy, weak circulation, and cramp—almost as comprehensive a cure as some of our modern universal specifics!

The medicinal properties of rosemary have been held by some to account for its funeral uses. At all events an ingenious writer of the seventeenth century held that the custom of carrying a sprig at a funeral had its rise from a notion of an "*alexipharmick*" or preservative virtue in the herb which would protect the wearer from "*pestilential distempers*," and be a powerful defence "*against the morbid effluvia of the corpse*." For the same reason, this writer asserts, it was customary to burn rosemary in the chambers of the sick, just like frankincense, "*whose odour is not much different from rosemary, which gave the Greeks occasion to call it Libanotis, from Libanos (frankincense).*"

The hyssop of the Bible is believed by some to be rosemary, and it is said that in the East it was customary to hang up a bunch in the house as a protection against evil spirits, and to use it in various ceremonies against enchantment. Perhaps

there was some connection between this custom and that of the Greeks, referred to by Aristotle, who regarded indigestion as the effect of witchcraft, and who used rue as an antidote. The dispelling of the charm was just the natural physical action of the herb. We are not aware, however, of rosemary being included in any western pharmacopœia as a corrective of dietetic errors.

In Devonshire, however, there was a more mystic use for rosemary in dispelling the charms of witches. A bunch of it had to be taken in the hand and dropped bit by bit on live coals, while the two first verses of the Sixty-eighth Psalm were recited, followed by the Lord's Prayer. Bay-leaves were sometimes used in the same manner; but if the afflicted one were suffering physically, he had also to take certain prescribed medicines. As an item of English folk-lore, Mr. Thistleton-Dyer mentions that rosemary worn about the body is said to strengthen the memory and to add to the success of the wearer in anything he may undertake.

It is as an emblem of remembrance that rosemary is most frequently used by the old poets. Thus Ophelia:

There is rosemary for you, that's for remembrance.  
I pray you, love, remember.

And in "*The Winter's Tale*":

For you there's rosemary and rue; these keep,  
Seeming and savour all the winter long;  
Grace and remembrance be with you both.

And thus Drayton:

He from his lass him lavender hath sent,  
Showing her love, and doth requital crave;  
Him rosemary his sweetheart, whose intent  
Is that he her should in remembrance have.

Quotations might be easily multiplied, but the reader will find in Brand's "*Popular Antiquities*" numerous references to the plant by writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As an emblem of rejoicing, rosemary was also often used. Hone quotes a contemporary account of the joyful entry of Queen Elizabeth into London in 1558, wherein occurs this passage: "*How many nosegays did her Grace receive at poor women's hands? How often times stayed she her chariot when she saw any simple body offer to speak to her Grace? A branch of rosemary given to her Grace, with a supplication by a poor woman about Fleet Bridge, was seen in her chariot till her Grace came to Westminster.*" The object of the particular floral



offering in this case is not very obvious, unless as an emblematic tribute to the maiden Queen.

Rosemary used to be carried in the hand at weddings, as well as strewed on the ground and dipped in the cup. Thus Stow narrates of a wedding in 1560, that "fine flowers and rosemary were strewed for them coming home;" and Brand cites numerous instances from old plays. In one, "the parties enter with rosemary, as if from a wedding;" and in Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady," the question is asked about a wedding, "Were the rosemary branches dipped?" This dipping, moreover, was in scented water as well as in the loving-cup, and hence the allusion in Dekker's "Wonderful Year" to a bride who had died on her wedding-night:

"Here is a strange alteration: for the rosemary that was washed in sweet water to set out the bridal, is now wet in tears to furnish her burial."

It is on record that Anne of Cleves wore rosemary at her wedding with Henry the Eighth; and in an account of some marriage festivities at Kenilworth, attended by Queen Elizabeth, there is frequent mention of the plant. An idea of how it was sometimes used is given in a description of a sixteenth century wedding quoted by the Rev. Hilderic Friend: "The bride being attired in a gown of sheep's russet and a kirtle of fine worsted, attired with abillement of gold" (milliner's French even then!), "and her hair, yellow as gold, hanging down behind her, which was curiously combed and plaited, she was led to church between two sweet boys, with bride-laces and rosemary tied about her silken sleeves. There was a fair bride-cup of silver-gilt carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary gilded very fair, and hung about with silken ribands of all colours."

Coles says that the garden rosemary was called "Rosmarinus coronarium," because the women made crowns and garlands of it. Ben Jonson says that it was customary for the bridesmaids to present the bridegroom next morning with a bunch of rosemary, and Brand says that as late as 1698 the custom still prevailed in England of decking the bridal bed with sprigs of rosemary. In Jonson's "Tale of a Tub," one of the characters assembled to await the intended bridegroom says: "Look an' the wenches ha' not found un out, and do present un with a van of rosemary and

bays, enough to vill a bow-pott or trim the head of my best vore-horse; we shall all ha' bride-laces and points, I see." And again, a country swain assures his sweetheart at their wedding: "We'll have rosemary and bays to vill a bow-pott, and with the same I'll trim the vorehead of my best vore-horse;" so that it would seem the decorative use was not confined to the bride, the guests, and the banquet.

For a love-charm the reputation of rosemary seem to have come from the South. There is an old Spanish proverb which runs:

Who passeth by the rosemarie,  
And careth not to take a spraye,  
For woman's love no care has he,  
Nor shall he, though he live for aye.

Mr. Thistleton-Dyer says that rosemary is used in some parts of the country, as nut-charms are on Hallowe'en, to foretell a lover. Only St. Agnes's Eve is the occasion on which to invoke with a sprig of rosemary or thyme with this formula:

St. Agnes, that's to lovers kind,  
Come, ease the troubles of my mind.

For love-potions, decoctions of rosemary were much employed.

As to funeral uses, those who are familiar with Hogarth's drawings will remember one of a funeral party with sprigs of rosemary in their hands. Misson, a French traveller (of the time of William the Third), thus describes our funeral ceremonies: "When they are ready to set out, they nail up the coffin, and a servant presents the company with sprigs of rosemary. Every one takes a sprig and carries it in his hand till the body is put into the grave, at which time they all throw their sprigs in after it."

Whether the fact that the rosemary buds in January has anything to do with its funeral uses admits of conjecture, as Sir Thomas Browne would say. But the fact was certainly present to the writer of the following beautiful verses, which were worthily rescued by Hone from a "fugitive copy," although the writer's name has been lost:

Sweet-scented flower! who art wont to bloom  
On January's front severe,  
And, o'er the wintry desert drear  
To waft thy waste perfume!  
Come, thou shalt form my nosegay now,  
And I will bind thee round my brow;  
And, as I twine the mournful wreath,  
I'll weave a melancholy song,  
And sweet the strain shall be, and long—  
The melody of death.

Come funeral flower! who lov'st to dwell  
With the pale corpse in lonely tomb,  
And throw across the desert gloom  
A sweet decaying smell.

Come, pressing lips, and lie with me  
Beneath the lonely alder-tree,  
And we will sleep a pleasant sleep,  
And not a care shall dare intrude,  
To break the marble solitude  
So peaceful and so deep.

And hark! the wind-god, as he flies,  
Moans hollow in the forest trees,  
And, sailing on the gusty breeze,  
Mysterious music dies.

Sweet flower! the requiem wild is mine.  
It warns me to the lonely shrine—  
The cold turf-altar of the dead.

My grave shall be in yon lone spot,  
Where, as I lie by all forgot,  
A dying fragrance thou wilt o'er my ashes shed.

In Dekker's "Wonderful Year" there is a description of a charnel-house pavement strewn with withered rosemary, hyacinths, cypress, and yew. During the Plague, rosemary was in such demand for funerals, that, says Dekker, what "had wont to be sold for twelpence an arnfull went now at six shillings a handfull." Certainly a remarkable rise. What was the price in 1531 we know not; but in an account of the funeral expenses of a Lord Mayor of London, who died in that year, appears an item, "For yerbes at the bewyral £0 1 0," which presumably refers to rosemary.

"Cypresse garlands," wrote Coles, "are of great account at funeralls among the gentiler sort; but Rosemary and Bayes are used by the commons both at funeralls and weddings. They are all plants which fade not a good while after they are gathered and used, as I conceive to intimate unto us that the remembrance of the present solemnity might not die presently, but be kept in minde for many yeares."

We have now seen something of the many significations of rosemary, and find an explanation of why the same plant was used for both weddings and funerals, in the fact that it emblemised remembrance by its evergreen and fragrant qualities. One may hesitate to believe in the man of whom it is recorded that he wanted to be married again on the day of his wife's funeral because the rosemary, which had been used at her burial, would come in usefully and economically for the wedding ceremony; but there is interest enough in the circumstance referred to by Shakespeare, that:

Our bridal flowers serve for a buried corpse.

#### AT A COUNTRY SALE.

SCENE: a flat, oak-shaded, grass-bordered Norfolk road. Time: eleven o'clock on

an Indian summer morning, the golden, glorious Indian summer of the East country. *Dramatis personæ*: the writer and, with his kind permission, the reader. The latter may be assured that he will find himself not unpleasantly situated, for the mellow sunshine warms without scorching, and the equinoctial gales having blown themselves away, the air is as soft as silk. A faint smell as of pot-pourri is wafted towards us from the fading flowers in the cottage gardens. It seems as though nature were "standing with reluctant feet" at the border-line between summer and winter.

As we walk along our eyes are dazzled by the glory of tree and hedge, beside which that of the lilies of the field—to say nothing of Solomon—would pale into insignificance. At no other season of the year is East Anglia remarkable for the brilliance of its colouring. In the spring it wears a garb of greenish-grey, in the summer of brownish-green; but in the autumn, as though by the touch of some magic wand, the grey turns to gold, and the brown to purple and crimson, till at length the whole country has the effect of being viewed through an old stained-glass window. Ladies with a taste for artistic arrangement carry home portions of tree and hedge, which they fasten in strange devices upon their drawing-room walls. But lo! as in the case of Rosamund's purple jar, or to use a less prosaic simile, the shining pebbles that children pick up on the seashore, the glory has all departed. The leaves, torn away from their setting of yellow sunshine and heavy morning dew, wax limp and dingy; the gold is grey again, and the purple brown.

There is evidently something in the wind to-day, for every few minutes a gig, a sulky, or a dealer's cart rattles past us. As a rule one may walk along this road for four or five miles at a stretch without meeting anything more exciting than a flock of sheep. It cannot be market-day, because the farmers who pass have their wives in Sunday garb seated beside them. There must surely be some local merry-making afoot, for the men have a jovial, hearty air, and the women wear a look of pleasant expectation. On the way to a race-meeting or a horse-show you may notice the same hail-fellow-well-met disposition, when even the stranger is accorded a cheerful "Good day," and offered a lift on his road.

It is easy to perceive that we are in the land of cobs, for there is scarcely a horse

to be seen except in the plough. Within the shafts of that dilapidated little pig-cart is a perfect specimen of the pure Norfolk galloway. Of darkest brown, save for the white star on his forehead, with muscles of whipcord and legs of steel, he is built both for strength and speed. Although he looks ready to jump out of his skin as he flashes past us, stepping well up to his crimson nostrils, his owner would, no doubt, truthfully assure us that the "missus" and the children can do anything with him, for he is a "regular cosset." This promising "young one" will soon be snapped up by a dealer who will take him to London, and make a hundred guineas of him for a park hack. He will be well worth it, for the good old Norfolk breed is dying out, owing to the influx of sluggish Welsh Taffies, Norwegian Skewbalds, and vicious, thick-headed Russians. This is a digression, for which, however, no apology is needed, since the Melancholy Burton has freely sanctioned both the use and the abuse of the digression.

Of course, we should not be in Norfolk if we did not hear a constant volley of chaff from the gigs that pass and repass each other. The wit is not of a very high order, but it seems to be much appreciated by both the chaffers and the chaffed.

"Hullo, together!" shouts a fat old farmer, bulging out on each side of his sulky, as he overtakes a middle-aged married pair. "Thought you was a young couple gooin' a-courtin'. Bob, you want a new hat to match your missus's bonnet."

The missus giggles delightedly, and Bob retorts in similar fashion.

"I'll give you a shillin for your hat, bor, to scare the crows off my land. Save me a boy and a clapper."

In these and the like amenities the time passes agreeably enough, until round a bend in the road we discover the cause of all this excitement. Here stands a large old-fashioned farm-house, the roomy yards and barns of which look melancholy and deserted. The posts and gates are adorned with big staring placards, and the trampled garden is littered with straw and scraps of newspaper. On the croquet-lawn is erected a huge tent, from which issues the monotonous sound of a man's voice, a voice evidently accustomed to public speaking.

If we force our way to the mouth of the tent we shall see a curious sight. At the far end sits a commanding-looking gentleman, none other than the local auctioneer, upon a dais composed of a kitchen chair hoisted

on a three-legged table—our methods are primitive in these parts. Down the middle of the tent run two long planks, in front of which sit two rows of women, who have been lucky enough to secure the pit-stalls in this place of entertainment, to which there is no charge for admission. These women cannot talk except in whispers, because auctioneer is but another name for autocrat, and a gentleman of the hammer will tolerate the sound of no voice but his own and that of the bidder. The majority of the female audience do not bid; they have come for amusement, not business. Only a small minority are there to fill some solid uninteresting wants at the lowest possible cost. They buy milk-pans, jugs—"you can't have too many jugs," they whisper to one another—and door-mats.

The real buyers are the dealers, who on this occasion are represented by two or three villainous-looking "cadgers" from the neighbouring market-towns. No smart broker from Norwich or Yarmouth has thought it worth while to put in an appearance. The dealers are the only persons who make no disguise of the fact that they are bidding. They stand well in view of the auctioneer, and close to the official who may best be described as the showman. Behind the rows of chairs occupied by the ladies stands a large concourse of people, mostly of the farmer or small tradesman class. The parson may appear after luncheon, or the ubiquitous country doctor may look in for a few minutes, but otherwise the gentry are conspicuous by their absence. Only about three per cent. of the crowd that surrounds us have come to buy; the rest push in and out, eat apples and gingerbread, and appear breathlessly interested in the price made by feather-beds and coal-scuttles.

The auctioneer strikes us as a happy man. He receives the admiring homage of the whole assemblage, his jokes are always laughed at, and he is enabled to enforce law and order in a manner that would fill with envious admiration the breast of any man. But the task of maintaining order is not so difficult as it might appear in that rough crowd, for the British public is always virtuous in public. The most debased-looking cadger present is righteously indignant at the least suspicion of rowdiness or rebellion against lawful authority on the part of his fellows.

As we watch the proceedings we are soon filled with awe and wonder at the supernatural quickness of the auctioneer's

vision. Is the man Argus-eyed that he is able to say thus rapidly, "Five shillings, six, seven; I'm offered seven shillings in three places." We have not been able to catch a single bid. As a matter of fact, one man has raised his eyebrows, another has jerked his pencil, a third has twitched the corner of his mouth, and all these infinitesimal motions have been perceived at one and the same moment by the little gentleman on the table.

The sale has begun, as usual, with the less interesting contents of the kitchen, store-room, and bedrooms. It is curious to note how certain articles are always eagerly competed for, while others are given away at prices which would make the mouth of a newly-married couple water. Cutlery always goes for its full value, there is a brisk market for kettles and saucepans, and quite a run upon matting. For breakable or cumbersome articles there is very little demand, since unless these are particularly good they are not worth the risk and trouble of carrying away. That combined breakfast and tea set is an extraordinary bargain at three-and-six, and so is that huge mahogany wardrobe at ten shillings.

To save ourselves from temptation we stroll out of the tent, and enter into conversation with a communicative man in a black coat, who may be either the dissenting minister or the schoolmaster. He knows, and is delighted to tell, the story of which this scene is the finale. It is a familiar tale enough, and lightened by not a touch of sensation or romance, yet it is not without instruction in its bearing upon the causes and effects of the so-called "agricultural distress."

It appears that the grandfather of the late owner of the farm made his pile in the earlier decades of the century, when one man's scarcity was another man's gain, and was able to buy the homestead which he had hitherto occupied as tenant. His son after him was a steady, hardworking man, not too proud to follow the plough, and take his own pigs to market. The son's wife made up her own butter, raised her own turkeys, and did all the work of the house with the assistance of a sturdy girl. The worthy couple made money hand-over-hand in the good times that succeeded the Crimean war. Then the children grew up. They had all been to boarding schools, and came home with "fine notions." The daughters had their piano and their pony-carriage, and never stirred a finger in the house.

The sons hunted, shot, and lived generally like young squires. At last the bad times which had been staved off since the passing of the Corn Laws by the spread of railways and the war, began in earnest. In 1876 set in a long series of bad harvests, while every year the competition of foreign markets was making itself more felt. The father died at the beginning of this era, and the eldest son had to pay their little fortunes to his mother and sisters, which left him with but slender capital wherewith to carry on the farm. Of course, he married, and, says our informant, "his wife was a perfect lady, for she kept three maids and put the washing out." The definition is a new one, and we accept it gratefully. Of course the new owner and his "perfect lady" would have thought it out of the question to return to the simple hardworking ways of the father and grandfather. The old market-gig had long ago been exchanged for a smart dog-cart, and the hunter was looked upon as a necessity. The dairy and poultry-yard were now under the care of hirelings, and, strange to say, they did not answer. The luxuries which could be managed in the days when the land yielded a good income were a different matter now, when a determined effort was necessary to make even a living out of it. The usual result followed. The husband took to drinking, and the smash was only a matter of time. The family had to give up their home, and see it and all their belongings pass into the hands of strangers.

This story is a chapter from the contemporary history of the English nation, and is just as important in its own way as the chapters that deal with the lives of Kings, Princes, and Governors. Upon it is raised the outcry about the poor farmer, who cannot make the land pay unless his rents are reduced and his tithes remitted. As a matter of fact, good land can always be made to pay, though not, at the present time, a high percentage. But no business, whether farming, shop-keeping, or other, will ever answer unless the owner has sufficient capital to start with, and is himself a sober, hardworking man, content to live in accordance with his station.

But let us return to the tent, where the proceedings have reached a more interesting stage. The furniture of the sitting-rooms is now being sold. There is not much here to tempt the dealers, for antique treasures are few. The old oak, if ever there were any, has long since been ousted by mahogany and rosewood. Stop a bit, though.



A marvellous old object is being dragged in at this moment, which was unearthed from among the contents of a lumber-room. It is marked in the catalogue: "Antique oak settee; imperfect." This is made of open wood-work, in the form of a double arm-chair, and is fast dropping to pieces with age and neglect. There is a general laugh as it appears, and some one remarks that it would be worth five shillings as a curiosity. But the dealers are already buzzing round it. They have perceived the eagles' heads, with the long hooked beaks, that finish off the arms, and the claws holding balls which form the feet. There is quite an eager competition for this venerable relic, which is finally secured by an old Jew for fifty shillings. The purchaser is delighted with his bargain, for which, when done up, he tells his neighbours he shall not take a penny less than fifteen pounds.

One of the chief humours of the sale is the unquenchable sanguineness of the auctioneer. Lot 235 has just been brought in, which consists of a representation of the Crucifixion carved in ivory—a curious object to be found in such a place, but illustrating probably the secret passion of one of the daughters of the house for some fascinating High Church curate.

"Now," says the auctioneer, with unconscious profanity, "here is a very elegant lot. Hold it up higher, Fred, that the ladies may see it. Shall we start the bidding at a sovereign? The article is honestly worth two."

A dead silence ensues, broken only by a sepulchral voice which says "Three bob." The modern descendant of Thor instantly climbs down with the philosophic resignation of a man long inured to disappointment, and says rapidly:

"Three shillings; any advance upon three shillings? I'm offered only three shillings for this most desirable lot," etc., etc.

The dilapidated-looking books are sold anonymously in lots of about half-a-dozen. Eager heads crane over each parcel to see whether there is a rare or well-illustrated work among its contents. A labourer buys a lot without examining it beforehand. No doubt he intends it for the children, who are so clever "at their books." He will be disappointed when he gets home to find that he has carried off an armful of directories and Latin grammars.

The pictures, particularly when coloured, always sell well, for the countryman loves a

"gay" picture, and is the best of customers to the enterprising grocer who gives away a chromo-lithograph with a pound of tea. There is also a brisk market for the parcels of tattered music, which go by no means for a song. The buyers look like small farmers or tradesmen, whose daughters, no doubt, have been to some seminary for young ladies, and who yearn for new "pieces" wherewith to afflict the old piano.

The job lots, or "sundries," are the most remarkable collections of useless rubbish. Why do people buy them, one asks in vain, and what do they do with them when they have got them? Of what value can that tray containing a broken chimney ornament, a toy horse (headless), a dusty Japanese hand-screen, some wooden chessmen, and several fragments of china be to that bird-like old dealer, and how will he ever recoup himself for the eighteenthpence he has paid for them? If we watch him for a moment we may solve the mystery. Before he shovels his purchase carelessly away in a corner of the tent, his grimy claws fasten upon one of the bits of china, which he wraps in paper and puts into his pocket. This is nothing less than the lid of an old Lowestoft jar, with the brown dog and the raised flowers all complete. The lid will be fitted on to a bit of imitation Lowestoft, and the china-maniac who buys it may think himself lucky that so much of his bargain is genuine.

Even the delights of a country sale begin to pall in time, and we have been standing quite long enough in this stuffy atmosphere. We will take our leave before the out-door effects—lawn-mower, roller, and flower-stand—are put up. As we pass through the yard we see several of the largest buyers packing their purchases after the extraordinary fashion of the dealer tribe. In that little open cart a man has placed a round table by way of foundation, on the top of that a gilt-framed looking-glass, then a pair of curtains, and last of all a chest of drawers. Under these circumstances it seems just as well that each of these articles went for considerably less than the value of the raw material.

#### THE WHITE WITCH.

THE White Witch stood on the harbour side, the wind sighed soft from the west,  
The brown sails drooped from each steady mast,  
The blue sea had not a crest;  
They placed the basin in her hands they had filled  
at the holy well,  
And of the luck of the fishing fleet they bade her  
look and tell.

The White Witch over the water bent, her face  
grew grey with pain,  
She brushed the mist from her keen black eyes, she  
looked in the bowl again;  
Once more she shivered, as if in fear, and her lips  
were drawn and white,  
As she gasped: "There's a heavy weird to dree, an'  
ye dare to sail to-night."

"I see the wild waves lashed to foam, away by  
great Bradda Head;  
I see the surge round the Chicken Rock, and the  
breaker's lip is red;  
I see where corpses toss in the Sound, with nets,  
and gear, and spars,  
And never a one of the fishing fleet is riding under  
the stars."

Black and stern the fishermen stood, as her bode  
the White Witch said,  
Till Kermode strode from out the group, and bared  
his hoary head,  
With: "The glass is steady, the sea is smooth, the  
nets are strong to haul.  
Our timbers are stout, our hearts are good, and  
Heaven is over us all."

"I say, set sail, my mates, and leave the witch to  
mutter and moan;  
I neither care to know her rede nor to heed her  
malison.  
I say, set sail; we Islemen sure can trust to our  
own right hand;  
An I'd my will the witch and her crew should be  
cleared from off our land."

Loud cheered the fishermen of Peel, and away from  
the harbour mouth,  
Like great brown birds each fishing-smack went  
heading for the south;  
And careless of threat and mocking word, careless  
of scoff and sneer,  
Shunned by the women and children all, the White  
Witch left the pier.

And o'er ever three bright suns arose, o'er sea and  
land to smile,  
Or ever three broad suns sank down behind St.  
Patrick's Isle,  
Through town, and hamlet, and mountain farm,  
the terrible tidings ran;  
There was mourning for the fishing fleet through  
the length and breadth of Man.

For few and far between the men who struggled to  
the shore,  
When the sudden tempest struck the fleet, and 'mid  
scud, and flash, and roar,  
Amid the rocks under Bradda Head and the deadly  
swirl of the Sound,  
The boats were foundered, crushed, or swamped;  
their gallant crews were drowned.

They gathered, a stern avenging crowd, on Slieu  
Wallin's lofty crest,  
They brought the White Witch to her doom, in her  
shroud of burial dressed;  
They forced her into the barrel spiked, while her  
shrieks rang shrill and wide;  
They sent her rolling to her death down the moun-  
tain's rocky side.

And still a barren track is left, 'mid gorse and  
heather-bell,  
Of the sentence and fulfilment stern to coming  
years to tell;  
And pilgrims to the sunny isle, if they scale Slieu  
Wallin's crest,  
May see the "Witch's Way" to death marked on  
the hill's broad breast.

## SOME DINNERS IN FICTION.

IN preceding numbers of this journal the present writer has dealt with a series of historic and notable dinners, and brought together some anecdotal particulars of the hosts who gave and the guests who ate them. In concluding the series, he proposes to glance at a few which belong to the realm of fiction, having been provided by novelists for the entertainment of their dramatic personæ.

We may take it to be a matter of regret that Sir Walter Scott does not set forth the bill of fare of the dinner which the Baron of Bradwardine put before the young Squire of Waverley Honour on his visit to Tully-Veolan. "We cannot rival the luxuries of your English table," said the Baron, "or give you the epulæ lautiores of Waverley—I say epulæ rather than prandium, because the latter phrase is popular; 'Epulæ ad senatum, prandium vero ad populum attinet,' says Suetonius Tranquillus." However, there was excellent cheer, according to the ideas of the presiding genius of the kitchen at Tully-Veolan, and young Waverley did justice to it. He had, afterwards, experience of Highland hospitality under the auspices of Fergus MacIvor. "Some pains," we are told, "had been bestowed in dressing the dishes of fish, game, etc., which were at the upper end of the table, and immediately under the eye of the English stranger. Lower down stood immense clumsy joints of mutton and beef, which, but for the absence of pork—abhorred in the Highlands—resembled the rude festivity of the banquet of Penelope's suitors. But the central dish was a yearling lamb, called 'a hog in har'st,' roasted whole. It was set upon its legs, with a bunch of parsley in its mouth, and was probably exhibited in that form to gratify the pride of the cook, who piqued himself more on the plenty than the elegance of his master's table. The sides of this poor animal were fiercely attacked by the clansmen, some with dirks, others with the knives which were usually in the same sheath with the dagger, so that it was soon rendered a mangled and rueful spectacle. Lower still, the victuals seemed of yet coarser quality, though sufficiently abundant. Broth, onions, cheese, and the fragments of the feast regaled the sons of Ivor who feasted in the open air."

Scott observes that it was of old the

Scottish custom for persons of all ranks to assemble at the same table, which might have been regarded as an assertion of the democratic principle of equality—only they did not all partake, you see, of the same fare. Fynes Morrison, an English traveller in the seventeenth century, says: "I myself was at a knight's house, who had many servants to attend him, that brought in his meat with their heads covered with blue caps, the table being more than half furnished with great platters of porridge, each having a little piece of sodden meat. And when the table was served, the servants did sit down with us; but the upper mess, instead of porridge, had a pullet, with some prunes in the broth."

Let me turn to another of Sir Walter's imaginary dinners. When the Laird of Monkbarns and young Lovel dine at the "Hawes"—"for so the inn on the southern side of Queensferry is denominated"—the landlord put on the table—"in the sanded parlour, hung with prints of the 'Four Seasons'"—sea-trout and caller haddocks, a mutton chop, and cranberry tarts. Not at all a bad dinner, I can assure you! But when Monkbarns plays the host under his own roof, "the dinner was such as suited a profound antiquary, comprehending many savoury specimens of Scottish viands, now disused at the tables of those who affect elegance. There was the relishing Solan goose, fresh from the Bass Rock, whose smell is so powerful that he is never cooked within doors; the hotch-potch—most delicious, to my thinking, in July, when green-peas and beans and other summer vegetables can be utilised; fish and sauce, and crappit heads; and chicken-pie, made after a recipe bequeathed to Monkbarns by his departed grandmother of happy memory. The wine was worthy of one who held to the excellent maxim of King Alphonso of Castile: 'Old wood to burn, old books to read, old wine to drink, and old friends to chat with.'"

Sir Walter seems to have been as fond of inns as Shenstone was. In "Redgauntlet" he takes the Quaker, Joshua Geddes, to the picturesque hostelry kept by Joe Crackenthorp on the bank of the Solway. Frugality was the "note" of the Quaker's dinner—a pint of ale, bread, butter, and Dutch cheese. And Peter Peebles, that humorous victim of the litigious passion, feeds there—for want of a "pluck pie," or a "souter's clod"—on a mutton pasty, a quart of barley-beer, with

a gill of sherry, and a dram or so of brandy.

Who has not laughed—at the same time twinkling away a tear—over the details of the dinner which Caleb Balderstone, in his anxiety to maintain the honour of Ravenswood, puts before his master and his master's guests? First there is the simulacrum or imaginary outline of a dinner fit for a duke, with capons in white broth, roast kid and bacon, roasted leveret, butter crabs, and veal Florentine; blackcock, purple damas, a tart, a "flam," and some winsome sweet things and comfits. But the real dinner dwindles down to a scant supply of venison from the inn, and a wild fowl which Caleb has carried off from the cooper's cottage. Yet this was plenty itself compared with the attenuated repast which on a previous day the old butler had put before Ravenswood and Bucklaw. "And for eating—what signifies telling a lee?—there's just the hinder end of the mutton ham that has been but three times on the table, and the nearer the bone the sweeter, as your honours weel ken, and there's the heel of the ewe-milk kebbuck wi' a bit of nice butter, and—and—that's a' that's to trust to."

Thomas Love Peacock, quaintest and most original of story-tellers, has a pretty taste in dinners, and is never unmindful of the fitness of things when arranging his imaginary menus. As for example, at the dinner given by Squire Crotchet, of Crotchet Castle, to his select friends, Dr. Folliott, Mr. MacQuedy, Mr. Skionar, and others. As Dr. Folliott, quoting from Rabelais, explains: there is a fine music in the "*cliquetis d'assiettes*," a refreshing shade in the "*ombre de salle à manger*," and a delightful fragrance in the "*fumées de rôti*." After soup a noble salmon attracts the organs, both olfactory and peptic, of those of the guests who do not prefer an equally noble turbot. While salmon and turbot are being discussed, the Doctor quotes a passage from Athanasius in support of his contention that the science of fish sauce is by no means brought to perfection, which no doubt is true, though oyster sauce and lobster sauce are praiseworthy inventions. A joint of lamb, with lemon and pepper, follows the fish, and the moderate but sufficing meal ends with chicken and asparagus. Not a bad dinner this, is it?

In the pleasant days of old when the first Lord Lytton was known to the world as Edward Lytton Bulwer, he posed as an expert in the culinary art;

and in "Pelham," which, though certainly not the best of his many works of fiction, is, perhaps, the cleverest, had a good deal to say on high gastronomic matters. His hero goes to dine with Lord Guloseton, a gourmet of the first water, and dines very well indeed. The soup, "*à la Carmelite*," suggests a libation in Madeira to the memory of the once famous monastic brotherhood to whom a grateful world is indebted for this inimitable preparation. While lingering over the turbot, Pelham (quoting from Ude) breaks out into a strain of fervid eloquence: "*Qu'un cuisinier est un mortel divin!*" Why should we not be proud of our knowledge in cookery? It is the soul of festivity at all times and to all ages. How many marriages have been the consequence of meeting at dinner? How much good fortune has been the result of a good supper? At what moment of our existence are we happier than at table? There hatred and animosity are lulled to sleep, and pleasure alone reigns. There the cook, by his skill and attention, anticipates our wishes in the happiest selection of the best dishes and decorations.

Afterwards a superb béchamelle is served. Oh, the inimitable sauce! Worth a memorial of an age when men knew how to live and eat "*en grand seigneur!*" While toying with a "*filet mignon de poulet*," Lord Guloseton tells an anecdote. During the residence at Pondicherry of Suffren, the French governor, a deputation of natives one day waited upon him. He was at dinner. "Tell them," he said, "that the Christian religion peremptorily forbids any Christian while at dinner from occupying himself with any earthly business except that of eating." The deputation retired, profoundly impressed, no doubt, by their ruler's piety.

Suffren, I may note, had good authority at his back. The Greeks regarded a hearty meal as a kind of thanksgiving to heaven—how many poor wretches would be only too glad to prove their gratitude in this way!—and Xenophon observes that as the Athenians had more gods than any other nation, so had they more feasts. And Euripides, in his comedy of "*The Cyclops*," makes Polypheme say that his stomach is his only god; and no doubt it is a deity which even in our own day has a good many devoted worshippers.

Lord Guloseton and his friend (I am going back to the novel) after some "*veau à la Dauphine*," and a quail or two (by

the way, Brillat-Savarin says that among game properly so-called, it is the pleasantest and "*la plus mignonne*," while a plump quail, he adds, charms by its taste, shape, and colour; it must not be cooked except by being roasted or "*en papillote*," because its flavour quickly evaporates), indulge in the dessert, which calls forth from Pelham the suggestion that at this stage of the meal perfumes should be served. It is, he says, their appropriate place; in confectionery (delicate invention of the sylphs!) we imitate the outlines of the rose and the jasmine; why not their odours, too?

From these gastronomic altitudes let us descend to the level of ordinary life. What delightful dinners one finds in Charles Dickens's books! I am sure he himself enjoyed the Christmas dinner at the Cratchits', and the Pickwickian dinners, as much as any of his readers have done; though hundreds and thousands have longed to handle knife and fork at Manor Farm! Then with what keen satisfaction he acts as purveyor for young David Copperfield! With how subtle an appreciation of boy-nature he puts down pudding as the *pièce de résistance*—either currant pudding, toothsome but dear, or a stout pale pudding, heavy and flabby, with great flat raisins in it, stuck in whole at wide distances apart—cheap, but satisfying! On extraordinary occasions he allows David to regale himself with a saveloy and a penny loaf, or a fourpenny plate of red beef from a cook's shop, or a plate of bread and cheese with a glass of beer. Such is the appetising variety of viands at the command of the happy owner of fourpence—happy, indeed, in the digestion that can do justice to them! In his early London life the great Samuel Johnson aspired to nothing much better. His most sumptuous dinner (at the "*Pine Apple*" in New Street) cost him only eightpence: "I had a cut of meat for sixpence, and bread for a penny, and gave the waiter a penny"—such is the great moralist's own record.

How good, too, is the description of the feast which David Copperfield prepares for his friend Steerforth, on the recommendation of Mrs. Cripp, the landlady! "A pair of hot roast fowls—from the pastrycook's; a dish of stewed beef, with vegetables—from the pastrycook's; two little corner things, as a raised pie and a dish of kidneys—from the pastrycook's; a tart and a shape of jelly—from the pastry-



cook's," Mrs. Cripp making herself responsible for the potatoes. Better still is the Micawber banquet, at which Mr. and Mrs. Micawber and Tommy Traddles were the guests. The bill of fare was sweetly simple: "a pair of soles, a small leg of mutton, and a pigeon-pie;" but what mattered, when Mr. Micawber was there with his flow of eloquence, Mrs. Micawber with her feminine grace, and Tommy Traddles with his inexhaustible good humour?

Thackeray, though something of a gastronome, does not take in his dinner scenes the interest that was felt by his great contemporary. Still, what can be better in its way than the bright little sketch in "Esmond," of Addison, and his friends Steele and Harry Esmond, in his apartments in the Haymarket, where a frugal dinner, consisting of a slice of meat and a penny loaf, was despatched by Addison in a very few minutes; after which the three sat and drunk Burgundy—a present from Lord Halifax? Then there is the feast—by way of contrast—given by the Ladies Castlewood at Kensington, when the tables of the dining-room were laid for a great entertainment, and the ladies wore gala dresses, and the gilt chandeliers were gay with twelve wax candles, and among the guests were such men as General Webb, and Steele, and St. John, and the Duke of Hamilton; and we have, too, the memorable dinner at the Sedleys', in Russell Square, at which Becky Sharp angled so skilfully for the retired Anglo-Indian, Joseph Sedley. Mrs. Sedley, as the reader will recollect, had prepared a curry for her son—"just as he liked it"—and in due course a portion of the dish is offered to Rebecca. Though suffering tortures from the cayenne pepper, she professes to relish it; but in an unlucky moment is induced to try a chili. Her agony is redoubled, and forces from her the despairing cry, "Water, for Heaven's sake, water!" However, she carries off her mortification gallantly. "I ought to have remembered," she says, "the pepper which the Princess of Persia put in the cream tarts in 'The Arabian Nights.'"

Let us pass on to the dinner at Queen's Crawley, which introduces us to Sir Pitt Crawley and his household. The side-board was covered with glistening old plate, old cups, both gold and silver, old salvers, and cruet-stands, like Rundell and Bridge's shop. Everything on the table was in silver too, and two footmen, with

red hair and canary-coloured liveries, stood on either side of the board.

"Mr. Crawley said a long grace, and Sir Pitt said Amen, and the great silver dish-covers were removed.

"What have we for dinner, Betsy?" said the Baronet.

"Mutton broth, I believe, Sir Pitt," answered Lady Crawley.

"Mouton aux navets," added the butler, gravely (pronounce, if you please, 'moutongonnavvy'), 'and the soup is potage de mouton à l'Ecoissaise. The side dishes contain pommes-de-terre au naturel and choufleur à l'eau.'

"Mutton's mutton," said the Baronet, 'and a devilish good thing too;' a sentiment in which he unconsciously agreed with Dean Swift.

Among other Thackerayan dinners I must note that at the fine hotel in Cavendish Square, at which George Osborne and his young wife entertained that "preux chevalier," Captain William Dobbin, and Joseph Sedley, prior to the departure of Osborne and Dobbin for the theatre of war in Belgium. That was the dinner at which Dobbin helped Joe to turtle soup, because Amelia, before whom the tureen sent up its perfume, knew so little of its elements that she was on the point of helping Sedley without giving him either calipash or calipee! though such ignorance has always seemed to me incredible on the part of a London merchant's daughter.

We must not omit the dinner given by Colonel Newcome to his strange assortment of guests, Pendennis, Fred Bayham, Mr. Binnie, the Rev. Honeyman, George Warrington, and Barnes Newcome; the dinner at which the Colonel sings his last song, and Clive resents an insult offered to his father by dashing a glass of wine in Barnes Newcome's face. This surely deserves a place among the most memorable dinners in fiction, and Thackeray's graphic description of it has always seemed to me a very successful piece of work.

For a middle-class dinner, I don't know that you can go to any better authority than Theodore Hook, in his "Maxwell." There are some good dinners in Trollope's stories, as in the "Vicar of Bullhampton," "Doctor Thorne," and "The Little House at Allington"; also in James Payn's, in George Meredith's, and in Thomas Hardy's. I recollect one in "Far from the Madding Crowd"—a bucolic dinner—which is admirable in its truth and humour. Of course, dinners are not wanting in Walter

Besant's fictions. But among our Victorian novelists there are few who, as caterers, come up to Lord Beaconsfield. In his "Henrietta Temple," he makes one of his characters observe, in reference to a book she has been reading: "How vivid is the artist's description of a ball or a dinner! everything lives and moves." And another remarks: "I do not despise the talent which describes so vividly a dinner and a ball." Certainly, Lord Beaconsfield possessed that talent. He knew how to individualise his guests; how to keep up a crisp and sparkling conversation among them, without being too witty or too elaborate. In the novel to which I have referred how bright is his sketch of the dinner given by that paragon of money-lenders, Mr. Bond Sharpe—what a happy name!—to Captain Armine, Lord Catchimwhocan—a caricature of a name—Lord Castlefyshe, Count Alcibiades de Mirabel—known in real life as Count D'Orsay—and others! "The dinners at Mr. Bond Sharpe's," we are told, "were dinners which his guests came to eat. Mr. Bond Sharpe had engaged for his clubhouse the most celebrated of living artists, a gentleman who, it was said, received a thousand a year, whose convenience was studied by a chariot, and his amusement secured by a box at the French play. There was, therefore, at first, little conversation, save criticism on the performances before them, and that chiefly panegyrical; each dish was delicious, each wine exquisite." In fact, as Count Mirabel afterwards declared, "it was a good dinner." He knew how to appreciate one. "I should like to see the man," continued the Count, "who would give me a bad dinner. That would be a 'bêtise,' to ask me to dine, and then give me a bad dinner." The justice of this statement can hardly be disputed. A man is under no obligation to ask another to dine with him; but if he does so, he puts himself under an obligation to dine him well.

The dinner in the sponging-house—I am still referring to "Henrietta Temple"—is an excellent good dinner. To Captain Armine, who is lying there a prisoner for debt, enters Count Mirabel, with helpful hands, and in the best of spirits. He proposes to stop and dine with him. Turning to the attendant, he asks:

"What can we have for dinner, man?"

"Gentleman's dinner's ordered, my lord; quite ready," said the waiter. "Champagne in ice, my lord."

"To be sure; everything that is good. Mon cher Armine, we shall have some fun."

"Yes, my lord," said the waiter, running downstairs. "Dinner for best drawing-room directly; green-pea soup, turbot, beefsteak, roast duck, and boiled chicken, everything that is good, champagne in ice. Two regular noba."

The dinner now appeared; and the two friends seated themselves.

"Potage admirable!" said Count Mirabel. "The best champagne I ever drank in my life. Mon brave, your health. Finest turbot I ever ate! I will give you some of the fins. Ah! you are glad to see me, my Armine, you are glad to see your friend. Encore champagne! Good Armine, excellent Armine! You must take some bifteak. The most tender bifteak I ever tasted! This is a fine dinner!"

I may add that the general winding-up, the dénouement, of "Henrietta Temple," takes place at a dinner, where the novelist assembles all his characters and makes them happy in their various ways.

Lord Macaulay once counted the number of swoons or fainting-fits that occurred in a novel which had fallen into his hands. In like manner, I have noted the astonishing number of dinners which Lord Beaconsfield has found necessary for working out the plot in "Coningsby."

1. Dinner—or, perhaps, I should say "lunch," with Périgord pie, truffles, etc.—at Monmouth House.

2. A little dinner, "not more than the Muses, with all the guests pretty, and some clever;" also at Monmouth House.

3. A dinner at Beaumanoir.

4. A dinner at Mr. Ormsby's.

5. A dinner—"only eggs and bacon, with cheese and a bottle of perry"—at the "Forest Inn."

6. A dinner at Beaumanoir.

7. A dinner—"plain, but perfect of its kind"—at Millbank.

8. A dinner at Coningsby Castle.

9. Another dinner—with Sidonia and Mr. Ormsby—at the Castle.

10. A third dinner—after Lord Monmouth's wedding—at the Castle.

11. A dinner given by Lord Monmouth at Paris—successful because "his lordship's plates were always hot."

12. Coningsby entertains Sir Joseph Wellinger—"in hall"—at St. John's, Cambridge.

13. A dinner—Oswald Millbank's—at Hellingsby.

14. A dinner at Millbank.

15. A dinner at Grillin's.

16. A dinner of four—Lord Monmouth, Clotilde, Ermengarde, and Coningsby—at Richmond.

17. A dinner at Lord Eskdale's.

18. A dinner at Sidonia's.

It is evident that Lord Beaconsfield believed in dinners, and in the magnitude of their influence, political, social, and moral—an all-round influence—as was natural enough in a man who, in the course of his wonderful career, had dined at so many distinguished tables, and knew how much secret history had been transacted there, and how much wit and wisdom diffused abroad. From Lady Blessington's table to the Queen's, from Gore House to Windsor Castle, he had run through a gamut of dinners—always crescendo, be it noted—and acquired a wide and profound knowledge of the art and mystery of dining.

In all his works the reader will find the same prominence given to the dinner, from "Vivian Grey" (in which the dinner scene between Vivian and the Marquis of Carabas recalls that between Pelham and Gyleson in Lord Lytton's "Pelham") to "Lothair"; and in the latest, as in the earliest, the novelist is always at his best when bringing out the idiosyncrasies of his puppets "round the mahogany tree." How he luxuriates in these banquets! How obvious it is that he does not "despise the talent which describes so vividly a dinner," but finds a pleasure in exercising it!

Here is a characteristic passage from "Lothair":

"It is curious," says the novelist, "that Lothair's first dinner at Brentham was almost his first introduction into refined society. He had been a guest at the occasional banquets of his uncle (Lord Culloden, a Scotch nobleman), but these were festivals of the Picts and Scots, rude plenty and coarse splendour, with noise instead of conversation, and a tumult of obstructive dependents, who impeded, by their want of skill, the very convenience which they were purposed to facilitate. How different the surrounding scene! A table covered with flowers, bright with fanciful crystal, and porcelain that had belonged to sovereigns, who had given a name to its colour or its fame. As for those present, all seemed grace and gentle-

ness, from the radiant daughter of the house to the noiseless attendants that anticipated all his wants and sometimes seemed to suggest his wishes."

In our latter-day novels you come upon nothing so good as this. Their characters seem never to dine, or breakfast, or take any other meal than, perhaps, a five o'clock tea. How should it be otherwise? Their authors are much too busy in analysing the emotions and tracking the ratiocinative methods of their heroes and heroines to find time to analyse the component parts of their meals, and follow them through their first, second, and third courses to the dessert.

Here is one of the "Lothair" dinners at Mrs. Putney Giles's:

"The repast was sumptuous. Lothair thought the dinner would never end, there were so many dishes, and apparently all of the highest pretension. But if his simple tastes had permitted him to take an interest in these details—which they did not—he would have been assisted by a splendid menu of gold and white typography, that was by the side of each guest. The table seemed literally to groan under vases and gigantic flagons; and, in its midst, rose a mountain of silver, on which, apparently, all the cardinal virtues, several of the Pagan deities, and Britannia herself illustrated with many lights a glowing inscription which described the fervent feeling of a grateful client."

To parody Nelson's famous words, this is the true Beaconsfield touch!

Yet another. Lord St. Jerome: "There they saw, in the midst of a chamber hung with green silk and adorned with some fine cabinet pictures, a small round table, bright and glowing. It was a lively dinner—a dinner where there could not be two conversations going on, and where even the silent take their share in the talk by their sympathy."

There are some fifteen or sixteen dinners introduced into "Lothair," and each is touched off in some felicitous descriptive phrases. Further, the reader who wishes to study the novelist's characteristic manner and method will find some capital dinner scenes in "The Young Duke," in "Sibyl," and in "Endymion."

It seems to me that one might properly suggest a new departure in criticism—with Mr. W. D. Howell's permission. Let the novelist, in future, be judged according to the quality and quantity of the dinners which he invents.

## MR. WINGROVE'S WAYS.

## A STORY IN TWO CHAPTERS.

## CHAPTER II.

IT was about half-past twelve o'clock on the Wednesday following Harold Wingrove's Saturday to Monday visit to Bath, and the landlady's maid was setting the table for lunch in his rooms in Westminster. They were pretty rooms. The house of which they formed part was old and picturesque, and Harold Wingrove, who prided himself on the possession of artistic taste, had made the most of their possibilities. He had had a window-seat placed in a little oriel window from which could be obtained a glimpse of the river. He had papered and painted everywhere, in undoubtedly artistic colours, and he had draped the folding-doors that led into his bedroom so successfully that, with the aid of a mirror, they presented an illusion of illimitable space. There were, also good pictures, and well-filled bookcases.

The whole effect of the room was one of inviting peace and luxurious tranquillity. Even the preparations for luncheon were unobtrusive, and in no way interfered with this.

The only object not in accordance with it all was the figure of Dick Wingrove, who was pacing backwards and forwards from the oriel window to the book-case at the other end of the room. His face was flushed, his eyes anxious, and his hair dishevelled; his steps were hasty and erratic, and his right hand played incessantly and restlessly with his moustache. His whole appearance denoted extreme agitation, and he was also very dusty and untidy, and looked as if he had just come from a journey. This was, indeed, the fact, he having arrived in town by the midday train from Bath half an hour earlier.

His unceasing walk up and down the room greatly confused and embarrassed the maid in her efforts to lay the table.

She was new to her place, and Dick Wingrove's visits to his brother being few and far between, she was unacquainted with his personal appearance. Since his arrival she had taken various furtive glances at him, and was gradually, but surely, coming to the conclusion that "the gentleman was off his head," which conclusion scarcely tended to lessen her embarrassment.

Of the inconvenience he was causing her, the usually courteous and considerate Dick

took, at this moment, not the slightest heed. Suddenly he stopped short in his walk, and confronted her.

"At what time did you say Mr. Harold Wingrove would be in?" he demanded of her, for at least the fourth time.

The bewildered damsel dropped a fork and a wine-glass before she could answer him; then she responded, also for the fourth time, in a very frightened voice, "About one, sir, if you please, sir."

Dick took two more agitated strides, and faced her again. "Is he punctual as a rule? What do you mean by 'about one'?" he enquired, hastily. "Do you mean before one, or after one?"

At this crisis, the maid's lingering doubt and indecision as to whether "the gentleman" was or was not a lunatic, disappeared entirely. She determined to rush downstairs and recommend her mistress to send for a policeman—in readiness to remove Dick if necessary.

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure," she began, falteringly, edging towards the door. Dick, thinking she meant to leave the room without answering him, took a step in her direction. She was just preparing to rise to the occasion with a shriek, when all further complications were averted by the opening of the door, and the entrance of Harold Wingrove himself.

"Dick, old boy!" he exclaimed, in utter amazement, as he caught sight of his brother; "who would have thought of finding you here?"

"Harold, I thought you never would come in."

"You can go, Susan; I'll ring for lunch," Harold Wingrove said to that petrified damsel, who thereupon fled incontinently to retail downstairs the story of "the cracked gentlemen belonging to the first floor."

"What on earth brought you to town, old fellow?" he added. "I needn't say you're very welcome, though; and you're just in time for some food. I'll have lunch up at once. I wonder if that girl has had the sense to say you're here." He moved towards the bell as he spoke; but Dick laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Don't bother about lunch," he said; "listen to me first. I've come to you because I am at my wits' end."

"What is up?" said Harold, staring at his brother. "Sit down, at any rate."

Dick obeyed him by sinking into a chair.



"It's father!" he said, with a gasp that ended in a groan.

"Well?"

"I give it up, Harold, and that's all about it!"

"What in the world has he done now?"

"He's done—that is, he proposes to do—something worse than anything he has done yet."

"For goodness' sake don't keep me waiting! What is it?"

"He is going to marry through the 'Matrimonial Oracle.'" With this Dick sank heavily back into his chair with a wearied gesture, as if, with the imparting of this startling information, he relinquished and threw on to Harold the responsibility he had borne so long.

Harold Wingrove started out of his chair as if he had been shot.

"An advertisement, Dick! Marry her, Dick!" he cried.

"That, and none other," returned Dick, gaining somewhat in self-possession, as his brother lost his. "An advertisement!"

"The 'Matrimonial Oracle,' Dick!" gasped Harold.

"The 'Matrimonial Oracle,' Harold," returned Dick.

"Great Scott!" said Harold, falling back into his chair as suddenly as he had started out of it. "What on earth is to be done?"

"What is to be done, is precisely what I came to ask you!" said Dick.

"How did you find out?" said Harold, faintly, after a moment's silence.

"How I found out is simple," answered Dick. "On Monday evening, after you were gone, I thought father odd and abstracted; at first I thought that he was missing you, simply. But he seemed absent, and thinking with a good deal of concentration about something, and altogether queer. I didn't bother, though; I knew Miss Margetson was away for a few days, and I didn't see who else he could have found yet. I just waited and kept a sharp look-out on him. He said nothing, though, till Tuesday. Then he mooned about the dining-room, before I went to business in the morning, like a boy who has been stealing apples and doesn't like to tell. I watched. At last he stood still under that picture of mother; and sighed a good deal, and said, chiefly to himself, but of course he meant me to hear: 'A house is a poor sort of place without a mistress. Poor and comfortless! A lady would cheer us all up.'"

"Great Caesar!" ejaculated Harold.

"I took him up sharply at that," Dick went on, "and asked him what he meant. He fussed and fidgeted, and would say nothing for a long time. At last he said that I must be aware that he had long had thoughts of marrying again, and asked if I didn't think it would be a very desirable thing to do. I said plainly that, on the contrary, I thought it would be the action of a confirmed lunatic, and then I went out and left him to think that over. Of course I thought then that he was only thinking of Miss Margetson, and that I could put that down with a firm hand. But when I got home in the evening, he was reading a paper that he put out of sight like lightning when he saw me. I kept my eyes open and saw where he put it; and I looked at it as soon as he went to dress. It was the 'Matrimonial Oracle.'"

"What was the advertisement?"

"I'm coming to that. He came down, and I could only glance at it then; but when he was gone to bed I took another look. Here it is," said Dick, drawing a paper from his breast-pocket. I got a copy to bring you. Here is the advertisement he had marked. You bet he wrote on Saturday to the advertiser. Now, will you kindly tell me what we'd better do?"

Harold took the paper from his brother and looked at the lines indicated by Dick's finger. The following words met his eyes:

"A lady, possessed of estimable qualities and private means, wishes to correspond with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. Cheerful and domesticated. Widower preferred. Address, A. D., office of this paper."

He read it twice through; the first time with no comprehension of the words he was reading; the second time, all the position rose up before him with startling clearness. He let the paper fall from his hands, and stared helplessly at Dick.

"He'll marry her before we can say Jack Robinson," remarked the latter, cheerfully, from the depths of his arm-chair. There was on his hot, harassed countenance a dawning light and animation—the light and animation arising from the excited sensation consequent on being the bearer of startling news; and side by side with this sensation had arisen the irrepressible instinct to make the news in question as bad as possible.

But Harold was not studying his brother's face, nor did he answer his words.

After a few moments of silence, he had turned on his heel abruptly and began to walk up and down. He was now pacing from the window to the bookcase, with steps that were quite as agitated as Dick's own had been half an hour before.

"She probably isn't even a lady; and he'll believe every blessed word she writes to him. He'll swear she's all he could wish. He'll never listen to a single word against her till we've got a step-mother!" Dick said, cheerfully. "Miss Margetson, or Mrs. Smith-Ridgway even, would have been better," he added.

"Dick, do hold your tongue and let me think," said his elder brother, sternly. Dick retired into the recesses of the arm-chair, and began to contemplate future possibilities and family trials with an imagination stimulated by the gloominess of the situation into absolute inspiration.

Harold continued his walk in silence.

"I've got it!" he exclaimed, suddenly, stopping short and bringing down his hand on the table with a force that made the glasses ring. "I've got it! We'll be even with him. I'll settle him and the whole thing all at once."

"Settle him?" said Dick, raising himself hurriedly. "Settle the whole thing!" he added in an amazed tone.

"Settle the whole thing," said his brother, triumphantly. "Ring for lunch, Dick."

"But how?" asked Dick, reaching mechanically towards the bell with a dazed expression on his face. "You can't, Harold. Goodness knows I've thought over every possible plan!"

"You come and have lunch, and I'll explain," said Harold.

A moment later lunch appeared. The two brothers drew their chairs to the table, and Harold scarcely waited for Susan to set down the plates and depart before he entered into an eager monologue, to which Dick listened with a countenance which grew more expressive moment by moment.

A few days later old Mr. Wingrove, grasping an umbrella and a rug, got slowly and carefully out of a train on to the main arrival platform at Paddington. He stood still when he had alighted, looking round him a little confusedly. A long sojourn in the comparative quiet of the city of Bath had by no means fitted him to cope successfully with the bustle of a London terminus.

However, after a short interval of con-

sideration, during which he was pushed in every direction by unscrupulous porters, at whom he gazed reproachfully and amazedly with his short-sighted blue eyes, he threaded his way through the crowd and contemplated the assembled cabs for a brief space. Then he proceeded to hail a four-wheeler by means of a graceful sweep of his umbrella and rug together. During the gesture, the umbrella, being old, became loosened at the spring and opened itself, thereby adding somewhat to the singular nature of the action. A cabman promptly obeyed the summons with an expressive twinkle in his eye, and Mr. Wingrove, controlling the umbrella with some difficulty, got in and directed the man to drive to a street in Westminster. It was the street in which Harold Wingrove lived, and Mr. Wingrove was on his way to his son's rooms. When he was established inside the cab he took from his pocket two letters: one of these he laid down on the seat beside him, the other he opened and began to read. It was a short note from Harold, and ran as follows:

"MY DEAR FATHER,—You are extremely welcome to use my rooms for your business interview on Monday. I am sorry that I myself shall be called out of town that morning.—Your affectionate son,  
"H. WINGROVE."

"Most fortunate!" Mr. Wingrove murmured to himself, as he refolded the letter. "I am sorry to miss dear Harold, of course; but in an interview of this kind, his presence would be inconvenient; I may say, highly inconvenient; and even the possibility of his appearance would have been a little trying. It is really most fortunate." He placed the letter carefully in its envelope, and put it back in his pocket. "It is a relief, too," he continued, as he did so, "to feel that Dick is well out of the way. He knows nothing of this—nothing. I did not even mention that I was going to Harold's rooms when I told him I was suddenly called to town. Caution is always desirable—always!" said Mr. Wingrove, chuckling with delight at his own acuteness.

But that chuckle might have ended rather abruptly, could Mr. Wingrove have looked through the back of the four-wheeler and seen, at a little distance behind him, a hansom containing the person of his son Dick, who was at that very moment holding converse with his driver

to the effect that the latter was to keep the four-wheeler in sight.

Mr. Wingrove now took up the other letter—the one he had placed on the seat—and proceeded to open it. The writing was a woman's, a pretty, neat, woman's hand.

"I will consent to give you an interview," the writer said. "I will be at the address you mention at three o'clock on Monday afternoon."

"Capital!" Mr. Wingrove said, aloud, as he refolded this letter and placed it, not loose in his pocket, but carefully in his pocket-book. "Capital! I really have managed this very well! Now it only remains to see the lady herself. And if all goes well, and we arrange it satisfactorily, I feel sure that she will be a charming wife—most charming. Let me glance at the advertisement again." He drew from the same pocket-book a slip of paper cut from the "Matrimonial Oracle" of the preceding Thursday. The slip contained an advertisement in these words: "A young lady of most prepossessing appearance and engaging manners is desirous of corresponding with a gentleman with a view to matrimony. Cultured, refined, and accomplished. Address, M. B., office of this paper."

"Far better than the first," he said to himself, in a tone of great satisfaction. "Evidently pleasing and attractive, while the other individual, A. D., was certainly not so much so. It is most fortunate that this caught my eye before I had gone too far with A. D. I am quite anxious to see the young lady, I am, indeed. She describes herself so modestly and so prettily in her letter, too. Oh, here we are!" as the four-wheeler drew up with a jerk at the door of Harold's lodgings.

Mr. Wingrove collected the umbrella and rug and dismounted with care. Then he grasped his personal property in his left hand and extracted a handful of loose coin from his pocket with the other.

"What is your fare from Paddington, my good man?" he said, approaching the cabman.

That functionary, to whom a hard life had early taught the lesson that the advent of gentlemen like Mr. Wingrove resembled angels' visits, rose promptly to the occasion.

"Seven-and-six, sir, if you please," he said.

"Seven - and - sixpence," repeated Mr. Wingrove, "that is rather an expensive fare. Perhaps," he soliloquised, thought-

fully, "an omnibus might have been cheaper, or the Underground Railway—but both are dangerous, very dangerous; and one does not grudge expense on an occasion like the present."

He thereupon placed the whole amount in the man's hand, and entered the house, the door of which was opened by the maid who had been so alarmed at Dick.

"Will you walk up to Mr. Wingrove's room, sir?" she said. The old gentleman followed her with the glow of satisfaction at his own excellent management growing stronger and stronger within him.

Arrived in Harold's room, he took out his watch. "Five minutes to three!" he said, "excellent time. She said three. Let me find her letter again, and hold it in my hand. It will simplify matters."

He took two or three impatient little turns about the room to while away the five minutes. Precisely as Big Ben struck, however, the door opened. It opened to admit a girl—a very pretty girl. She was very prettily dressed too; and her well-made frock and picturesque hat seemed to set off every line of her slender figure and sweet face. She entered with a quiet, graceful movement, and Mr. Wingrove rose hurriedly to meet her, his satisfaction growing by leaps and bounds to exultation. This was, he told himself, by far the cleverest thing he had ever done in his life. He did not observe, in his elated pre-occupation, that the girl had left slightly ajar the door by which she entered.

"My dear young lady," he began excitedly. The girl made him a gracious little bow in answer. He pulled out a chair from the table, and she seated herself with a word or two of thanks. She smiled as she spoke, and her smile made her prettier still, Mr. Wingrove thought. "Our letters have settled the preliminaries," he went on, quickly. "I need scarcely allude to them again. But may I ask you, my dear madam, to inspect me personally as much as you wish? We are each taking a momentous step, and I should wish you to take a calm and unhurried inspection of me. Allow me to walk to the window." So saying he rose, and the girl rose also. Her pretty face was crimson, and her lips were pressed very tightly together. At this moment a kind of suppressed choke might have been heard outside the door. Mr. Wingrove turned round slowly, that the girl might survey him from every possible point of view. Her eyes were fixed on him, gravely; but her face grew

yet more crimson, and she raised her handkerchief to her lips as if to conceal the fact that they were trembling. Mr. Wingrove noted these signs of confusion, and said, mentally: "Delightful traits—shyness and modesty! Will you permit me to resume my seat?" he added aloud. "Have you sufficiently noted my personal appearance?"

"Yes, thank you," she said, in a low tone.

"May I venture to hope that you find it such as you can like?"

"Yes," she returned in a still lower tone, her handkerchief still over her lips.

Mr. Wingrove's face expressed intense contentment.

"I will not presume to tell you what I think of yours," he said; "it would be impertinent. I have placed before you, madam, by letter, all the details of my position. It only now remains to ask the final question: Will you marry me?"

The girl's face was now quite composed, save for her eyes, which were dancing with laughter.

"No," she said, in a louder voice. "I am greatly obliged for the honour you do me, sir; but I cannot marry you."

Before Mr. Wingrove could express himself in any way, the door was pushed hastily open, and Harold Wingrove entered, followed immediately by his brother Dick. At the sight of his son, Mr. Wingrove's countenance, which had taken a shade of blue at the girl's words, turned a vivid green.

"Harold!" he stammered, "I thought you were going out of town to-day."

"So I was, father," returned his son, pleasantly. "I have been and come back. I went to fetch—your correspondent," putting his hand on the girl's shoulder as he spoke. "I am sorry, sir; but she certainly cannot marry you. She is engaged to marry me."

Mr. Wingrove sunk heavily and helplessly into an easy-chair beside him.

"I do not understand," he said. "This lady met me by appointment. What have you to do with it?"

"You answered last week an advertisement in the 'Matrimonial Oracle,' signed A. D.," said Harold Wingrove, tersely.

"I did," came in a subdued voice from the easy-chair.

"You subsequently broke off negotiations with A. D., and answered another advertisement from a lady, signed M. B.?"

"I did," repeated the poor gentleman, feeling as if some utterly supernatural misfortune had suddenly descended on his incomparable plans.

"Dick," said Harold, turning to his brother, "you tell him the rest."

Dick accordingly advanced towards his father. Mr. Wingrove had not realised the presence of his younger son in his agitation hitherto. But as he did so, he felt that it was only one more in the overwhelming concatenation of circumstances which were crushing him to the ground.

"Father," began Dick, with a cheerful air, "you know that I've spoken to you a hundred times about the way you flirt."

Mr. Wingrove's mouth opened as if to speak; but apparently no adequate words came to him, for he shut it again silently, and Dick pursued, unconscious of the effort: "You see, you're always so—interested in young women; and when I knew you had seen and marked A. D.'s advertisement in the 'Matrimonial Oracle' I made sure you would answer it, and probably interview her, and goodness only knew what sort of woman you might get hold of, and what would happen then. So I came up to Harold, and we concocted another advertisement, more attractive than A. D.'s; and I got the paper with it in, marked our advertisement, and left it about, hoping you'd answer it and let A. D. go. You did. Harold got Marion to correspond with you. She wrote the letters at Harold's dictation, and he brought her here this morning to keep her appointment. That's all, sir, I believe."

Mr. Wingrove rose very slowly from his chair.

"Harold," he said, looking around for his hat, and not looking at his sons or his correspondent, "I shall be obliged if you will provide me with a 'Bradshaw.'"

But Harold found himself quite unable to provide a "Bradshaw"; and how it happened Mr. Wingrove never knew, but half an hour later he found himself partaking of tea, poured out for him by M. B., with a dawning consciousness coming to him that a pretty young woman was quite as charming, and far less likely to be embarrassing, when viewed in the light of a daughter-in-law than in that of a possible wife. And, to Dick's great relief, he has never seemed likely to change his opinion since.